



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, NEIGHBORHOODS, AND STRATEGIC PLANNING DEPARTMENT

M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: March 21, 2007

TO: Ray Giometti, Chair
Planning Commissioners

FROM: Erika Conkling, Senior Planner

SUBJECT: **CPA 2007-M-05 Sunset Boulevard Rezone**

Applicants have requested the rezone of approximately 9.61 acres of property from a combination of Residential Multi-Family and Employment Area- Industrial land use designations (with Residential Multi-Family and Industrial-Heavy zoning) to Residential Medium Density land use (with Residential- 10 units per net acre zoning).

The proposed area for rezone is located near the western edge of the City, in the vicinity of Martin Luther King Way, immediately south of the unimproved right-of-way of South 137th Street and immediately north of the unimproved right-of-way of South 140th Street and the BNSF rail road line. There are two blocks of property subject to this 9.61 acre rezone proposal, owned by different owners. QIP (Quarry Industrial Park, LLC) owns the bulk of the property; 8.71 acres, shown on the attached site plan as lots 2, 3 and the majority of lot 1 of the Junction Addition to Seattle plat. This area is currently designated for Employment Area- Industrial (EA-I) land use and zoned Industrial- Heavy (I-H). A small, triangular shaped portion of lot 1 has been excluded from the application for rezone. That portion is designated for Residential Low Density (RLD) land use and is zoned Resource Conservation (RC). Virtu (V.E.E. Associates, LLC) owns the other property subject to the rezone. This property is a 0.9 acre triangle, in the south east corner of the Sunset View Apartment Homes property. It is currently designated for Residential Multi-Family (RMF) land use and zone Residential Multi-Family (RM-F).

Sensitive areas have been mapped over the entire site of the proposed rezone. Steep slopes separate the proposed rezone area from the Sunset View Apartments to the north. Protected slopes, greater than 40%, fringe the proposed rezone site, and the site itself slopes upward from south to north, with nearly the entire land area ranging between 15-25% slopes, with pockets of slopes up to 40%, and small pockets without regulated slopes. Given this topography, the entire area is mapped as an "unclassified" landslide hazard area in the City's sensitive areas maps.

The proposed rezone is also in the vicinity of a wetland and a Great Blue Heron Colony on City of Renton parkland, known as the Black River Riparian Forest and Wetland.

This area is south of the proposed rezone site, and is separated from the site by the BNSF rail line. On the City of Renton critical areas map, the wetland is shown as more than 200 feet away from the proposed rezone site. In the applicant's environmental checklist, it states that at the closest point the wetland is 110 feet away from the site. The January 15, 2007 *Great Blue Heron Assessment* for the QIP and Virtu Properties by Raedeke Associates, Inc., analyzes the potential effects of the proposed rezone on the Heron Colony. Topographically, the colony's nests are located approximately 800 feet away from the nearest point of rezone site, and further separated by a 50 foot slope. The report concludes that residential uses, as requested by the applicant, would provide less disturbance to Heron nesting practices than heavy industrial use, which is allowed under the current zoning.

At the present time, the proposed area is considered vacant according to King County records. Although the Virtu property is part of the Sunset View Apartment Homes parcel, the portion subject to the proposed rezone is vacant, and physically separated from the residential structures topographically. Formerly part of the Black River Quarry, the QIP site is currently used for the storage of construction materials, storage of construction equipment, and for construction materials recycling activities. Surrounding land uses include: a residential subdivision for single family detached homes (Sunset Bluff) to the east, on land zoned R-10 and in the Residential Medium Density (RMD) land use designation; multi-family housing (Sunset View Apartments) to the north, on land zoned RMF in the RMF land use designation; construction storage, materials recycling, and a concrete batch plant on land to the east zoned IH and designated for EA-I land use; and an active railroad right-of-way and the Black River Riparian Forest to the south on land zoned RC and in the Employment Area- Valley (EA-V) land use designation.

The applicant is requesting a Comprehensive Plan Amendment and Rezone for the QIP and Virtu properties to be designated for RMD land use and zoned Residential 10 units per net acre (R-10) consistent with the property immediately to the east (Sunset Bluff). Applicants estimate that the proposed rezone would allow the construction of 55-60 new single-family homes on the site. In the project narrative, they state that this is an advantage to the City because it replaces the existing construction storage and recycling use with residential use, which supplements the City's tax base. They also argue that residential uses are in high demand and the proposal is a logical extension of the residential development at Sunset Bluff and Sunset View Apartments. Topography creates a natural boundary between the proposed rezone area and the other industrially zoned land. The applicants also cite a series of Comprehensive Plan policies for residential growth including Policy LU-123, that the City pursue multiple strategies for residential growth; Policy LU-124 to prioritize growth in areas close to the Urban Center; and Policy LU-129 to support small lot single-family development over multi-family development. Also cited are Objective LU-GG and Policies LU-157 and LU-158 regarding the criteria for zoning property within the RMD land use designation.

In addition to those cited by the applicants, there are a number of Objectives and Policies in the Comprehensive Plan that guide the examination of this rezone, including policies on industrial land uses and policies on residential land uses.

Policies for the RMF land use designation call for a variety of high quality multi-family projects in existing RMF areas. RMF Objectives LU-JJ, LU-KK, and LU-LL and associated Policies, do not readily apply to the portion of the Virtu parcel that is requesting rezone. However, they do apply to the parcel as a whole, which has already been developed consistent with the RMF land use designation as the Sunset View Apartments. Large multi-family projects often have undeveloped space within them. Such a space often acts as a buffer against higher intensity land uses, such as the current QIP industrial land use designation (or to provide transition to surrounding lower intensity land uses). It would not make sense to even review the land use designation on this portion of a parcel, except in the circumstance that it is to be developed with the topographically related property to the south. Given the circumstance that the property owner has an interest in coordinating development with the adjacent parcels, it makes sense that the land use designation of this piece should be the same as that of the QIP properties, but only if the land use designation is compatible with the existing multi-family use.

Applicable industrial policies include those in the Economic Development Element, as well as those in the EA-I land use designation. Renton's Comprehensive Plan makes a clear argument that industrial land is important to the City's employment and land base. Objective ED-C, asks the City to sustain and expand the industrial base in the EA-I designation, in part through the transition of surplus industrial properties to their highest and best use in companion Policy ED-171. The tenth goal of the land use element specifically calls for a mix of uses in the City's designated Employment Areas to promote economic growth and a strong employment base. This is further explored in Land Use Objective LU-C, and its associated policies, which call for sufficient capacity for both job growth and housing targets as mandated by GMA. Additionally, the Employment Areas Objectives LU-XXX and associated Policies discuss the importance of providing adequate land capacity for employment and economic growth. Although the Objectives and Policies for the EA-I designation (LU-ZZZ and associated Policies) maintain the same direction, they specify the importance of coordinating future land use within, and adjacent to, EA-I areas to prevent incompatible uses.

Applicable residential policies for this proposal include Objective LU-BB, which calls for the City to plan for high quality residential growth, through pursuing the multiple strategies called for in its associated Policies LU- 123 through LU- 125. RMD Objective LU-GG specifically directs the City to designate land for RMD where access, topography, and adjacent land uses allow for a mix of multi-family and single-family unit types supported by transit and urban services. Policies associated with Objectives LU-GG and LU-HH identify the RMD designation as an opportunity for diverse housing types, expansion of the street grid, and organized around public amenities.

Several questions arise after reviewing applicable Comprehensive Plan policies:

- Is residential development the highest and best use for this property?
- Does the City of Renton have an adequate supply of industrial land?
- Does the City of Renton have an adequate supply of residential land?
- Would residential use be compatible with surrounding uses?

These questions must be carefully considered prior to making a formal recommendation on this project.

Attachments: Vicinity Map
Sensitive Areas Map
Topographical Map
Existing and Proposed Land Use Map
Site Plan
Applicable Comprehensive Plan Policies